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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/FO

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SUBJECT: AF DAS PAGE'S FEBRUARY 9 COURTESY CALLS ON
UK-BASED AFRICAN AMBASSADORS

Classified By: Political Counselor Robin Quinville,
reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary. AF DAS Susan Page paid courtesy calls on February 9 on Kenyan High Commissioner Ephram Waweru Ngare, South African High Commissioner Dr. Zola Skweyiya, Nigerian High Commissioner Dr. Dalhatu Tafida, Zimbabwean Ambassador Gabriel Mharadze Machinga, and Ethiopian Ambassador Berhanu Kebede, all appointed to the Court of St. James's. The African envoys greatly appreciated DAS Page's outreach to them as senior diplomats for their governments and took the opportunity to brief on the political and economic situations in their respective countries. End summary.

Kenya

¶2. (C) Kenya High Commissioner Ephram Waweru Ngare painted an optimistic picture of Kenya's progress on the reform agenda, asserting that the referendum on the constitution would take place in April for an August adoption of the new governing document. He acknowledged the domestic progress that needs to take place before the next general elections and described Somalia as a very serious threat to Kenya's security. Describing Eritrea as a major spoiler in the region, he pledged the Kenyan government's full support for the USG's counter-terrorism initiatives in the region.

South Africa

¶3. (C) South African High Commissioner Dr. Zola Skweyiya raised Zimbabwe, noting that the history between the ANC and ZANU-PF makes the parties "not as close as people think." While welcoming establishment of the media, elections, and human rights commissions, he said the commission leaders will be critical for progress. He said South Africa will continue to push for resolution of the other outstanding issues: appointment of the MDC governors; swearing-in of Deputy Minister of Agriculture-designate Roy Bennett, the appointment in violation of the GPA of Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) Governor Gideon Gono and Attorney General Johannes Tomana. He concluded that UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband's statements in Parliament that sanctions would be lifted when Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai requested were unhelpful. On bilateral issues, he took on board the USG's desire to see the South Africa-U.S. Binational Commission up and running productively as soon as possible. He noted that he and his staff are focused on the upcoming March 2010 state visit of President Zuma to the UK.

Nigeria

¶4. (C) Nigerian High Commissioner Dr. Dalhatu Tafida, flanked by a host of political counselors, called attention to the effective manner in which the Government of Nigeria dealt with the violence in Jos and conducted credible elections in Anambra state. He noted the GON's concern about its recent listing as a "country of interest" by the Transportation Security Administration without consultation. His political counselors raised issues related to investment in Nigeria, follow-through on the Glen Eagles and G-20 commitments for the developing world, post-Copenhagen climate change follow-up, and USG policy on Western Sahara.

Zimbabwe

¶5. (C) Former IVLP exchange participant, Zimbabwean Ambassador Gabriel Mharadze Machinga, listed the accomplishments of the Zimbabwean government under the framework of the Global Peace Agreement (GPA) and argued that the progress merited relief on sanctions, noting that the listing of many of the parastatals limited the support and services available to average Zimbabweans. Calling for a more "positive approach," he suggested a return to the "good old days" of the bilateral relationship and encouraged the USG to treat all three parties in the GPA equally.

Ethiopia

¶6. (C) Offering an impressive assessment of the security, political, and economic situations in the region, Ethiopian Ambassador Berhanu Kebede said that Somalia and Eritrea are

Ethiopia's top priorities in the region; Eritrea continues to play a spoiler role through the region, especially in Somalia; and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Somalia needs significantly more international support to deliver on security, humanitarian issues, and economic development. He said Ethiopia's upcoming elections "will be completely different than 2005" because the ruling party is committed to a fair contest and all parties have signed up to the code of conduct, which was developed by an international organization. He also provided a robust defense to the Civil Society Law, arguing the importance of governance and human rights organizations being home grown and domestically funded.

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